**The Washington State Board of Education**

Governance | Achievement | High School and College Preparation | Math & Science | Effective Workforce

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## Achievement Index FAQ
Updated: January 2011

Note: You can find the Achievement Index and related materials [here](here).

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1. What is the responsibility of the State Board of Education regarding the Washington Achievement Index?

    ESHB 2261 (signed into law May 2009) charged the State Board of Education (SBE) with creating a new tool for measuring schools. The purpose was to provide feedback to schools and districts to self-assess their progress, to identify schools with exemplary student performance, and to provide a potential replacement for Adequate Yearly Progress measures currently required by the U.S. Department of Education. The SBE will advocate for the use of our Achievement Index ("the Index") through the reauthorization process of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Currently schools use the Index for self-assessment. SBE also partners with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to recognize schools for high performance.

2. What data is used to calculate the SBE Achievement Index?

    The data sources are listed in the business rules that can be found on our website [here](here).

3. How is the data collected?

    School districts submit their data directly to OSPI through CEDARS. OSPI provides a window each year when the data can be uploaded or revised. The Washington Achievement Awards are provided based on data received by a given date. Incorrect data may result in a school's omission from the award ceremony. SBE staff does not have the manpower and resources to award schools retroactively, so it is important for each district to check their data carefully.

4.  Whom do I contact if there is an error in the data?

    Please contact Sarah Rich, Research Director of SBE, at 360.725.6011 or through email at
    sarah.rich@k12.wa.us.

5.  What data are included in the Index?

    The percent of students meeting standard on the Measurement of Student Progress and the
    High School Proficiency Exam (and prior to 2010, the Washington Assessment of Student
    Learning) in reading, writing, mathematics, and science are all included. Extended graduation
    rates are also included.

6.  What are indicators? Why not just measure how a school does for all students?

    There are four indicators: achievement by students who are not from low-income families,
    achievement by students from low-income families, achievement vs. a school's "statistical
    peers," and a school's improvement from the previous year. A separate achievement gap matrix
    measures the progress a school is making in closing achievement gaps by comparing White and
    Asian student achievement (combined) to Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and
    Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student achievement (combined). The achievement gap measure
    indicates improvement from one year to the next as well as a peers rating.

    Below you will find an example Index.

### School Year 2009-2010

| INDICATORS | Reading | Writing | Math | Science | Ext Grad Rate | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Achievement of non-low income students | 7 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6.2 |
| Achievement of low income students | 6 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4.2 |
| Achievement vs. peers | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5.0 |
| Improvement from the previous year | 6 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 5.4 |
| **Index Scores** | **5.75** | **6.00** | **4.00** | **5.25** | **5.00** | **5.2** **Very Good** |

(OUTCOMES header spans Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Ext Grad Rate)

← Overall Index

### 2009 - 10 Achievement Gap

| INDICATORS | Reading Met Std | Reading Peers | Reading Imp | Math Met Std | Math Peers | Math Imp | Ext Graduation Rate Met Std | Ext Graduation Rate Peers | Ext Graduation Rate Imp | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Achievement of Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic | 5 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3.22 |
| Achievement of white and Asian students | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 5.89 |
| **Achievement Gap** | | | | | | | | | | **2.67** |

7.  What do the numbers 1-7 signify, and what are 'tiers'?

    Each cell of the matrix is rated on a 7-point scale (from 1 to 7). The 7-point scale gives
    sufficient "spread" in the results. Each of the four subjects is rated using the same set of
    benchmarks across the entire school/district (i.e., all subjects have the same set of
    benchmarks and the assessment results are the aggregate totals for all the tested grades).
    The overall Index is the simple average of all 20 ratings, ranging from 1.0 to 7.0. The higher
    the Index score, the better the performance level of the school/district. The 7- point scale
    lines up to a 5-level tier scale ranging from Exemplary to Struggling.

| TIER | INDEX RANGE |
|------|-------------|
| Exemplary | 7.00-5.50 |
| Very Good | 5.49-5.00 |
| Good | 4.99-4.00 |
| Fair | 3.99-2.50 |
| Struggling | 2.49-1.00 |

8. On the Achievement Index spreadsheet, our enrollment numbers seem low and some of the data do not match our Report Card data. Why?

   For the purposes of the Index, 'enrolled' students is the total number of students *tested* in all grades in the building. The following data, including free- and reduced-price lunch data, are based upon these numbers.

9. Where can I find the business rules used for the Index?

   They are posted on the [OSPI website](OSPI website).

10. How are Achievement vs. Peers and Improvement calculated?

   A Learning Index is used to calculate Achievement vs. Peers and Improvement.

   The Achievement vs. Peers measure is determined by predicting the average level of achievement that would occur in schools and districts with similar student characteristics – that is, similar percentages of students who are from low-income families, are English Language Learners, are mobile, or who are in special education or gifted programs. Ratings are based on how far a school or district is above or below the predicted level.

   The Learning Index measures Achievement vs. Peers in reading, writing, math, and science. This Index is based on the percentage of students who score at each proficiency level on Washington's standards-based tests:

   > 4 = exceeds standards
   > 3 = meets standards
   > 2 = partially meets standard
   > 1 = well below standard

   The Learning Index averages all the student results. The Learning Index ranges from 0 to 4 and is similar to a grade point average.

   Thus, if a school's Learning Index is above what is predicted by .20 (similar to a difference in grade point average of 2.50 and 2.70), the school receives a rating of 7. This score recognizes that the school outperformed those with similar student characteristics. Scores in the middle of the range (-.05 to .05) show that a school or district is performing on par with peers with similar student characteristics. Scores at the bottom of the range indicate that a school or district has fallen behind its peers.

A distinctive feature of the Learning Index is that it includes a measure for students who exceed standards. In the current federal AYP system, there is no recognition or reward for having students meet the highest level of achievement.

The Learning Index is also used to measure Improvement. The improvement score is the amount of change that took place in the Learning Index from the previous year. Higher ratings are given when the Learning Index increases and lower ratings are given when they decline.

| | Reading | Writing | Math | Science | Ext. Grad. Rate[1] |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Achievement (Non low-income) / Achievement (Low-income) | % met standard    Rating<br>90 - 100% ........... 7<br>80 - 89.9% .......... 6<br>70 - 79.9% .......... 5<br>60 - 69.9% .......... 4<br>50 - 59.9% .......... 3<br>40 - 49.0% .......... 2<br>< 40% ................ 1 | | | | Rate       Rating<br>> 95................ 7<br>90 - 95%......... 6<br>85 - 89.9%...... 5<br>80 - 84.9%...... 4<br>75 - 79.9%...... 3<br>70 - 74.9%...... 2<br>< 70%............ 1 |
| Achievement vs. Peers[2] | Difference in<br>Learning Index    Rating<br>> .20 ................... 7<br>.151 to .20........... 6<br>.051 to .15 .......... 5<br>-.05 to .05 .......... 4<br>-.051 to -.15 ........ 3<br>-.151 to -.20 ........ 2<br>< -.20 ................. 1 | | | | Difference<br>in Rate    Rating<br>> 12................ 7<br>6.1 to 12 ......... 6<br>3.1 to 6........... 5<br>-3 to 3............. 4<br>-3.1 to -6......... 3<br>-6.1 to -12....... 2<br>< -12.............. 1 |
| Improvement (change from the previous year) | Change in<br>Learning Index    Rating<br>> .15 ................... 7<br>.101 to .15........... 6<br>.051 to .10........... 5<br>-.05 to .05 .......... 4<br>-.051 to -.10 ........ 3<br>-.101 to -.15 ........ 2<br>< -.15 ................. 1 | | | | Change<br>in Rate    Rating<br>> 6.................. 7<br>4.1 to 6 ........... 6<br>2.1 to 4 ........... 5<br>-2 to 2............. 4<br>-2.1 to -4......... 3<br>-4.1 to -6......... 2<br>< -6................. 1 |

Note: Assessment-related results are the combined results of both the regular state tests and the alternate assessments (WAAS) from all grades.

[1]This outcome only applies to schools and districts that are authorized to graduate students.
[2]This indicator adjusts the outcomes using statistical methods (multiple regression) to control for five student characteristics beyond a school's control: the percentage of low-income, ELL, special education, gifted, and mobile students. (Mobile students are those who are not continuously enrolled from October 1 through the entire testing period.) Scores are the difference between the actual and predicted levels of the Learning Index. Scores above 0 are "beating the odds" and negative scores are below the predicted level. Separate analyses are conducted for schools for each type of school (elementary, middle, high, multiple grade levels).

11. Why make a distinction between low-income and non low-income performance?

> There is a strong correlation between a student's socio-economic background and academic performance. Comparing how students from these two sub-groups perform enables schools to better chart their success in closing the achievement gap.

12. Why aren't the results of every racial/ethnic group disaggregated??

> The new achievement gap matrix compares typically higher-achieving subgroups of students (White and Asian) to typically lower-achieving subgroups (Hispanic, Black, Pacific Islander, and Native American/Alaska Native). Due to federal privacy laws, it is not permitted to display data when the number of students in a subgroup is less than 10. Providing these data at an individual school level would result, in most cases, in blank cells. Combining subgroups brings the number of students above 10 in many cases and allows data to be displayed.

13. Do the Index results reflect the socio-economic status of students who attend the school?

> No. Great care was taken to ensure the results do not reflect the socio-economic status (SES) of a school's student population. Many high-poverty schools achieve high index scores because they score well on the Improvement and Peers indicators. Some have found ways to help their low-income students perform well, which further helps their Index score. Of the schools being recognized for Overall Excellence, many have more than half their students living in low-income homes. The correlation between the Index results and a school's economic status is relatively low; we cannot predict a school's Index score by looking just at its poverty level.

14. Will it be difficult for a high-performing school to improve its Index score?

> Not necessarily. Some high-performing schools still show improvement and outperform their peers. The Improvement indicator is based on change in the Learning Index from the previous year. This separate index reflects change across the entire range of performance levels. So when higher performing schools move students from Level 3 to Level 4, they get credit for the improvement. (Likewise, moving a student from Level 1 to Level 2 reflects improvement as well.)

> Ceiling Effect: If a Learning Index for a subject reaches 3.85 or higher and remains at 3.85 or higher for two consecutive years, then the Improvement Indicator is not calculated for the school nor included in the overall Accountability Index Rate(s). Similarly, if the Extended Graduation Rate reaches 94% or higher and remains at 94% or higher for two consecutive years, the Extended Graduation Rate Outcome cell for the Improvement Indicator is not calculated for the school nor included in the overall Accountability Index Rate(s). These rules are in place so that a consistently high-performing school is not punished with a low Improvement score.

15. Why do some schools in wealthy communities have relatively low Index scores?

> Some schools in wealthier communities do not perform well on the Improvement, Peers, and low-income indicators. These schools cannot depend on the performance of their non low-income students to get a good Index score because these students represent only one of the four indicators. These schools need to keep improving and help their low-income students achieve at higher levels in order to get a better Index score in the future.

16.   How is the Index different from AYP?

The Index is different in several critical ways. First, it includes writing and science assessment data which is not currently part of AYP. Second, the Index is used for recognition and self-assessment rather than the corrective steps embedded in AYP. Third, the Index takes into account improvement from one year to the next, as well as a Peers rating, which is a statistical comparison to demographically similar schools.